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When Senate Democrats joined our Republican colleagues last fall in moving the Workforce Development Act to Conference, it was another step in a long tradition of bipartisan efforts to help Americans be the best-educated and best-trained workforce in the world. Many Democrats voted for passage of the Senate bill in the hope that concerns regarding some provisions in the Senate bill could be worked out in Conference. Most of those concerns were outlined in the President's May 20th letter to the conferees. To date, however, they have not been adequately addressed.

In addition to maintaining an adequate level of investment in the educational and workforce development system, this legislation needs to be amended to insure an adequate level of service for dislocated workers, including an realistic, workable, and effective skill grant program; to preserve national funding for the continued implementation of state School-to-Work programs; to ensure accountability to taxpayers by establishing high standards of program quality and clear lines of accountability for results; to maintain local governmental responsibility for job training in conjunction with business-led local boards; to restore Senate language which provided that education authorities clearly be responsible for education resources at the state and local level; and to provide adequate targeting of resources to the local level to serve both in-school and at-risk youth.

We believe these changes are essential to creating a job training and education system that enables all Americans to prosper in a global economy. Without those elements, we would be unable to support a conference agreement. We would urge that the conferees return to the table, and return also to the spirit of bipartisan cooperation that marked previous legislation in this vital area. Together, we can fashion an agreement that will enjoy the support of Republicans and Democrats alike.

Sincerely,